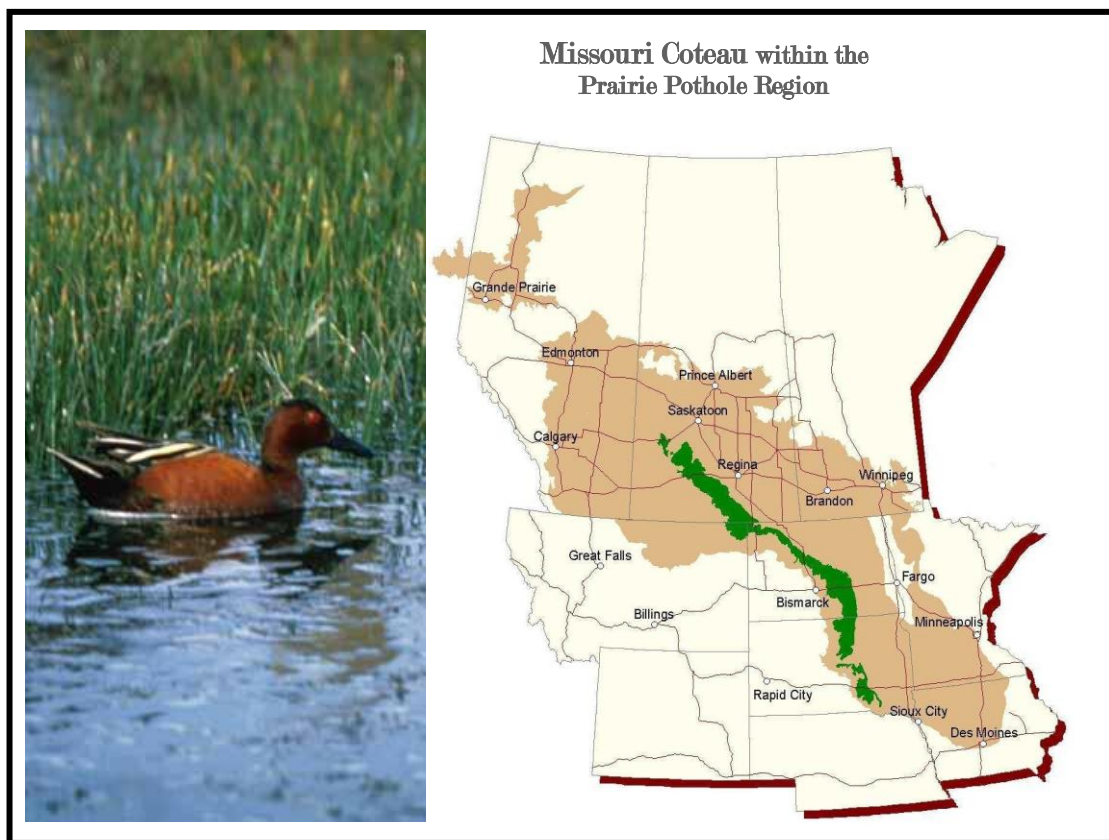


Final Report: April 2006 – March 2007



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries



submitted by:
Ducks Unlimited Canada

and

Ducks Unlimited Inc.

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Funding and Partnerships: 4th year of 5 year agreement






During 2006 the Missouri Coteau remained one of the critical areas of focus for Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). Generous program funding from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has allowed the Coteau Legacy program to advance towards its conservation goals for this critical waterfowl landscape. LDWF funds were leveraged 8 times through strong ongoing relationships between various conservation partners in Canada and the United States made possible through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP). State agency and DU Inc. funds in conjunction with U.S. Federal funding through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) has allowed DUC's Saskatchewan Operations to accelerate its efforts to conserve and restore

valuable acres of wetland and upland habitat. NAWCA provides matching funds for habitat conservation on Crown and private lands alike, and promotes extension activities that foster good land stewardship ethics to private landowners. The securement, enhancement and technical assistance components of program delivery all play an integral part in long-term waterfowl population recovery.

This report highlights DUC's program and partnership successes within the Missouri Coteau during the period April 1, 2006 through to March 31, 2007. DUC wishes to acknowledge the continued generous financial support of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, during this, the 4th year of the 5 year program funding agreement.

Missouri Coteau – FY 2007

	REVENUE	US \$	Cdn \$	 
	LDWF	204,000	224,400	
	DU Inc.	204,000	224,400	
	NAWCA	408,000	448,800	
	Other Contributions	827,923	910,715	
	Totals	1,643,923	1,808,315	
*Conversion Rate (US\$ X 1.1 = \$ Cdn)				

Canadian partners of the NAWMP are committed to investing in waterfowl conservation in the Prairie Pothole Region and across Canada. The Canadian contribution will meet or exceed 25% of US partner contributions to habitat work in Canada.

Target Area: Missouri Coteau “Hills of the Prairie”



Coteau Diversity

At the heart of the Prairie Pothole Region is the Missouri Coteau or “hills of the prairie”. The Missouri Coteau is a 25,700 square mile band of recessional moraine, 10 to 50 miles wide, which stretches from Saskatchewan southeasterly into North and South Dakota. The Missouri Coteau is a broken escarpment characterized by gently rolling to rugged hills that generate high wetland densities. During wet years these highly productive prairie wetlands in concert with an abundance of native grassland provide some of the very best waterfowl habitat in North America. The Missouri Coteau is a last vestige of prairie grasslands and pothole wetlands that once dominated the Prairie Region.

Waterfowl values of the Coteau are as high as 80 to 100 predicted breeding pairs per square mile based on average habitat conditions. During wet years this landscape is critically important to the recovery of waterfowl populations. Breeding densities can exceed 150 pairs or 300 ducks per square mile. The frequency of drought and dynamic changes within the wetlands of the Coteau creates highly productive habitat for breeding waterfowl. Attractive to breeding mallards, gadwall, blue wing teal and northern shoveler, the Coteau also supports some of the highest breeding densities of pintails in the prairies.

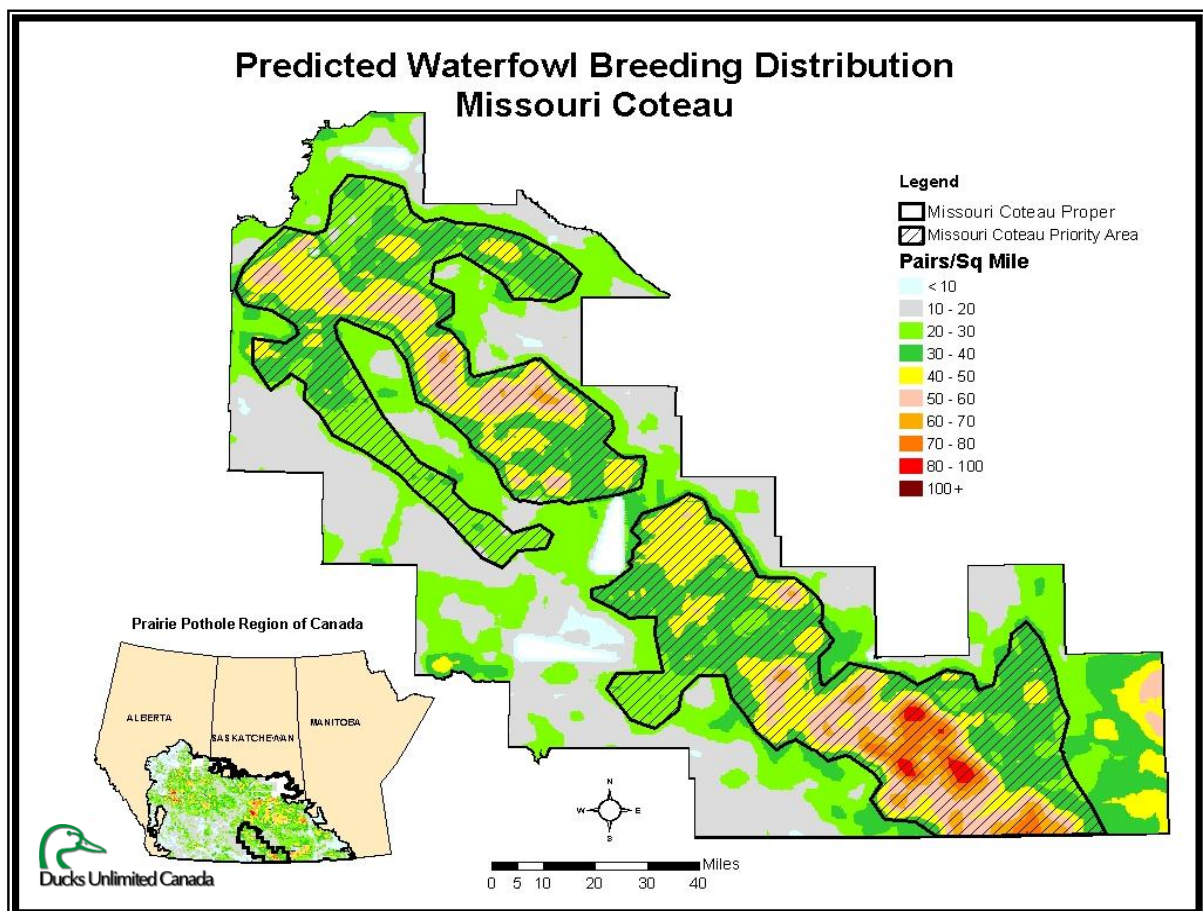


Figure 1. Predicted breeding waterfowl density and distribution within the Missouri Coteau. 3

Agriculture and Policy

FY 2007



AGRICULTURE

Continued strength of the cattle industry supports efforts to convert cultivated lands to grass in certain areas of the Prairie Pothole Region. This industry has benefited from good moisture conditions resulting in excellent grass production and high success in new grass stand establishment.

Impacts of the growing ethanol and bio diesel industry in both the US and Canada has lead to strengthen commodity prices for most annual crops. Much of the agricultural industry has reacted with increased land rental rates and pressures to break grasslands. A general optimism is leading to increased activity in land sales and equipment sales.

Winter wheat seeded acreage grew sharply with a good seeding window last fall and the increasing interest in the crop resulting in over 1.2 million acres seeded across prairie Canada. A new partnership with Sask Wheat Pool and Ag Pro has moved this crop to a higher awareness in Ag industry within Canada which is spilling into north western US. The number 2 variety seeded in Montana and North Dakota is a variety developed in Canada with direct support from DUC.

POLICY ADVANCEMENTS

The Next Generation in Ag Policy will replace the current Ag Policy Framework when it expires in less than a year. The development of Next Generation Ag Policy is well underway with round 3 of public consultations nearly complete. DUC has forwarded a number of recommendations including an expanded Greencover Canada program to enrole an additional 2 million acres.

Although the final Greencover Canada forage conversion numbers are not yet known, by March 31, 2008 applications are expected from >6000 farmers applying for over 600,000 acres of conversion. Greencover focuses on the conversion of physically marginal cropland converted to grass. Much of this has occurred in areas that will benefit waterfowl, especially northern pintails.

New wetland protection policy is advancing in all three Prairie Provinces. DUC has been directly involved in the development of new wetland policy recognizing DUC's decades of wetland science and management expertise. As an example, Alberta's "Water for Life" strategy has incorporated many of DUC's recommendations for wetland conservation.



Waterfowl and Habitat: 2006 - 2007 Conditions



The Missouri Coteau is situated within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Waterfowl Survey Stratum # 32.

The Province of Saskatchewan experienced above average spring pond conditions in 2006, due to a good fall frost seal and average snow accumulations. Provincially, pond numbers were 38.5 % above the long-term average with more than 2.8 million ponds. Spring pond numbers in Stratum 32 were 28.6 % above the long-term average. Generally drier conditions prevailed across the prairies (stratum 30). Late season rainfall in the parklands and extending into the northern end of the Missouri Coteau resulted in a good frost seal across much of Saskatchewan.

In early spring of 2006, stratum 32 attracted an estimated 3.7 million waterfowl. Fifteen species of waterfowl were recorded on the May 2006 breeding survey of Stratum 32. A pilot year brood survey coordinated by Canadian Wildlife Service was conducted by a number of Canadian partners. Survey results indicated a strong breeding effort in the PPR of Canada.

The second year of a brood survey coordinated by CWS was conducted by a number of Canadian partners. Survey results indicated a strong breeding effort in the PPR of Canada. Due to very good wetland conditions in portions of Saskatchewan there was a strong late hatch bolstering mid continent waterfowl populations.



In the heart of the Missouri Coteau the rolling landscape covered with grass and dotted with wetlands provides the ideal environment for waterfowl production. Waterfowl conservation and beef cattle ranches work towards a sustainable future (near Radville, Saskatchewan).

Program Highlights: “Land Lease and Conservation Forages”



Consistent with the three primary goals of the “Coteau Legacy Conservation Plan” (Protection, Improved Function and Compensation) as indicated in the FY2007 proposal to LDWF, conservation funding from states and other sources were pooled to provide maximum impact on the landscape.

LAND LEASE

Long term leasing of land is not a high priority for DUC however it is a tool in the box that given the right opportunity can be a cost effective habitat conservation tool. In FY 2007 two different parcels of land came forward which provided unique leasing options. The 317.6 acre Crowley property was leased from the land owner for the value of the property tax, \$1067 per year or \$3.36/acre per year. The Torkelson lease was negotiated at < 50% of the current agricultural lease rates, resulting in an annual lease rate of \$7.46 acre.

Both opportunities offered a uniquely cost effective option to protect existing habitat and convert cultivated lands to planted nesting cover.

FORAGE PROGRAMS

The rebounding success of forages across western Canada including the Missouri Coteau is providing a much more attractive landscape for waterfowl. Building on the >7300 acres seeded last year DUC signed up an additional 9091 acres of cultivated land to be converted to tame grass and maintained as a health forage stand for 10 years. In addition all properties signed under the DUC conservation forages agreements require the protection of existing native upland and wetland habitats for the 10 year term of the agreement protecting an additional 4231.5 ac. The one time payment of \$25 per acre is a very effective tool at influencing landscape conversion and protection.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS- FY07 (current year)

Goal	Acre Goals	Actual Acres	Cost-CDN \$,000	% Accomplished
Protection	3,000	8,802	1,058	293%
Improved Ecological Function	233,000	222,368*	322	95%
Compensation	18,500	39,531	428	214%
TOTAL	254,500	270,701	\$1,808	106%

* As ranchers adopt conservation practices resulting from rangeland extension, measuring accomplishments is compiled for both influenced acres and acres under an extension agreement.

Program Accomplishments: FY 2007



“Coteau Legacy Plan” FY07 Accomplishments

Conservation Goals/Programs	Direct Program (Acres) ¹	Extension Program (Acres) ²	FY07 Total (Acres)	FY07 Total Cost
Protection of Existing Habitat				
Land Purchase	288.2	-	288.2	
Conservation Easements	3026.1	-	3026.1	
Lease Conservation Lands	1,255.8	-	1,255.8	
Conservation Agmt	4231.5	-	4231.5	
Habitat Management ⁴	-	-	454,556 ⁴	
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>8,801.6</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>8,801.6</i>	<i>1,057,734</i>
Improved Ecological Function				
Grazing Extension ³	10,950	200,000 ³	210,950	
Stock Watering Development	1600	-	1600	
Grazing Agreements	9818	-	9818	
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>22,368</i>	<i>200,000</i>	<i>222,368</i>	<i>322,210</i>
Compensate for Lost Habitats				
Conservation Forages	9091	-	9091	
Winter Cereals	8440	22,000	30,440	
Planted Cover	-	-	280	
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>17,531</i>	<i>22,000</i>	<i>39,531</i>	<i>428,371</i>
Total	48,700.6	222,000	270,700.6	\$1,808,315

¹ Direct program – Programs whereby DUC directly impacts actions of producers, improves, or protects habitat.

² Extension program – Programs whereby DUC extends technical advice mutually beneficial to producers and waterfowl habitat.

³ Acres based on entire holdings of producers involved in extension activities. Represents the maximum potential impact on the landscape for the fiscal year.

⁴ Habitat Management - These acres include the existing projects requiring annual management to maintain healthy habitats. The acres in this category are not include in the total of habitat accomplishments.

Program Accomplishments: ...continued



The growth of waterfowl populations wintering in Louisiana hinges greatly on the productivity of the Canadian breeding grounds. DUC's western region is operating on a clear set of goals to protect and restore waterfowl habitat. The Western Region attracts greater than 70% of North America's breeding waterfowl. Under wet conditions the Missouri Coteau attracts a high proportion of this population and contributes significantly to North American Waterfowl production. The outstanding efforts of DUC conservation staff in the Missouri Coteau have resulted in 96% of the 5 year goals being accomplished after only 4 years.

Progress Toward 5-Year Goals

Program	5-Year Goal	4 yr Total	% Accomplished
Paid Perpetual Easements	10,910	16,733	153%
Tax Credit Program	249,767	240,673	96%
Land Purchase	1,760	578	33%
Grazing Extension	1,049,000	959,200	91%
Stock Watering	-	3450	
Grazing Agreements	10,000	21,172	212%
Government Pastures	66,825	65,828	99%
Conservation Forages	32,330	18,630	58%
Winter Cereals	44,700	77,401	173%
TOTAL	1,465,292	1,403,665	96%

LDWF's significant contributions to DU in partnership with others have contributed to the securement (minimum 10 year agreement) of 142,829 acres of habitat over the past 4 years. These accomplishments provide habitat capable of supporting 89,270 breeding pairs of ducks over the next 10 years. The impact is even greater through influence on the management and stewardship of an additional 1,260,836 acres of habitat.